



**For Immediate Release
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NLFL President Joins in Call to the Premiers: Canadians Need Life-Saving Pharmacare Plan

St. John's - Canadian Labour Leaders urge Premiers to re-commit to establishing a single-payer, universal prescription drug plan in Canada.

Meeting in Alberta, for events concurrent to the Council of the Federation, Labour Leaders from across Canada urge provincial and territorial Premiers to lobby the federal government for a national Pharmacare plan; to ensure all Canadians have access to life-saving medications, and to bring down the costs of the current, increasingly out-of-control system.

“In Newfoundland and Labrador, public spending covers less than half the cost of prescription medicines,” said Mary Shortall, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL). “Of the 236,200 workers in this province, an estimated one in three – over 78,000 – don’t have health benefits.”

Evidence shows, Canadians who rely on prescription drugs simply don’t have the money to cover costs, and instead are splitting pills, skipping dosages to stretch prescriptions, sharing medicines, or going deep into debt to make ends meet. A national survey by Angus Reid, in 2015, found that 26% of Atlantic Canadians don’t take their medications as prescribed because they can’t afford to. This can cause serious health complications. “When people skip their medications or otherwise ignore doctors’ orders, because of costs, additional burdens to the healthcare system actually cost everyone more,” said President Mary Shortall.

Canada’s public per capita prescription drug spending in 2014 was second highest amongst OECD countries, at \$772 USD per person, far above the OECD average. Canada is the only country with universal health care that does not have a universal program for prescription coverage, despite the stated goal of universal coverage in the 2004-2014 Health Accord.

THERE IS A SOLUTION:

“Canadians know bulk buying is the smart option,” said President Mary Shortall. “In public opinion surveys, over 90% of both citizens and employers believe a Universal Prescription Drug Plan is important to Canadian healthcare coverage. Pharmacare is the type of smart policy Canadians are looking for from our political leaders.”



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By adopting a single-payer program, Canadians would benefit from bulk purchasing power, giving them the power to obtain competitively priced prescription drugs. Through aggressive pharmaceutical company competition for Canadian business, a single-payer, universal prescription drug program could save Canadians approximately \$7.3 billion a year, based on an additional \$1 billion in public sector spending.

During the Council of the Federation events, Presidents of provincial and territorial labour federations will urge Premiers, from provinces and territories across Canada, to re-commit to a single-payer, universal prescription drug plan, to save lives while saving Canadians money.

Together, Canada's provincial and territorial labour federations give voice to over three million workers, represented by the Alberta Federation of Labour, British Columbia Federation of Labour, Canadian Labour Congress, Manitoba Federation of Labour, New Brunswick Federation of Labour, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, Northern Territories Federation of Labour, Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, Ontario Federation of Labour, Prince Edward Island Federation of Labour, Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and Yukon Federation of Labour.

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